

# **Analysis, Mountain Laurel/Chalet Company Web Sites – Part 2**

## **A Possible Strategy**

**Client: Mountain Laurel Chalets**

**Site: mtnlaurelchalets.com**

### **Demographics**

The first thing I would do - other than fixing the missing pages and unclickable links I've mentioned - is determine the demographic groups. As far as I can tell, they include family vacationers, skiers, romantic couples, reunions and possible a few others. I would create a page for each of these, if they don't already have one, with a compact, targeted sales message, and two links: "Make a Reservation", which is really the "Contact Us" page, to close the sale and "Chalet Search." I would make sure each of these pages had its own photo(s) – no duplicates - that was related to what the page was about.

I would beef up the "Contact Us" page so that it had two functions: to make a reservation or to ask a question. I would include both a phone number and an email address. I would make this page as professional looking as possible.

I would embed the "Chalet Search" page into the template for the rest of the site so it looks like the rest of the site. I would simplify it so that there is only one other thing on the page other than the navigation and the chalet listings – "Make a Reservation." (If you don't like "Make a Reservations," then "Book a Chalet" or whatever is standard lingo for the industry.

## Incentives

I next thing I would do is determine the selling points for each group. What is the number one thing they are looking for? What is the second thing? What is the third? I would incorporate those into my sales message to each group and create incentive(s) to match that group.

For example, let's say for the demographic Romantic Couples that one of the main selling points is area restaurants – because they plan to eat out a lot. How difficult would it be to develop a coupon book to the most romantic restaurants in the area and give that to the couples when they arrive, perhaps as part of a gift basket? You may want to list that in your copy on the “Romantic Couples” page, or you may want it to be a surprise. Either way, you would soon develop the reputation of taking good care of your couples.

The Romantic Couples page should have some very romantic shots on it – not the cheesy ones by Gary Woods that are on there now.

You should think of each of these demographic groups, your incentives for them and their accompanying web page as separate brands. You need to develop and promote each brand separately, devoting the necessary funds to each brand based on the percentage of your business they represent.

One last word about incentives: the only one I see is “No Cleaning Fee.” This reminds me of the “Free Written Estimates” incentive on the Dekalb Roofing Company site. Is this really an incentive? I've never rented a chalet, but I've rented cabins before, and I've never been asked to pay a cleaning fee, nor even to clean the cabin before we left. So this is new to me. I just don't see this as a very strong incentive. But if people are

typically charged \$50 to \$100 to have someone clean their cabin after they've left, then maybe it is.

## **Photos**

This is a no-brainer. Good photos of the Smokey Mountains abound. Sprinkled throughout the site, these are pieces of bait to get the visitor to click the button "Make a Reservation," which should always be within eyeshot. I might even make the photos clickable so that they go to the "Make a Reservation" page.

## **Videos**

This is a little more difficult, since it involves greater expense. I would focus initially on the video on the home page, making it a good overall introduction to the property, including shots of the more attractive chalets, shots of the more spectacular views, shots of some of the clubhouses, shots of the couple, shots of area attractions, etc. This is primarily for those who are unfamiliar with the property and the area. Repeat renters don't need it.

After I had my main video, then I would concentrate on replacing the YouTube videos with more professionally done ones. I've already described what I mean by more professionally done in my first report.

## **Other Changes**

I listed enough other changes in my first report to keep a web designer busy for a couple of hours, if not days.

I'd keep my message on the home page simple.

I'd create my own information about Smokey Mountains National Park, area restaurants and area attractions, keeping the links that take people off-site to a minimum. But when I do, I'd make sure they open in a new window – not take them off my site.

I'm sure the listings of the individual chalets took years to put together, so I would update those as the need arises. But I would definitely try to find another way to display them. The present way seems old-fashioned and slow-loading.

As I made these various changes, I would make them with SEO in mind – for example, working keywords into the copy, naming the photos with keywords, using keyword friendly links, etc. My feeling is that, like the site, whatever SEO exists right now was done haphazardly. If, going forward, the SEO is intentional, as changes to the site should be, then they should have far better results.

And a final word about the structure of the site: Right now there is none. Going forward, I would categorize files, putting them into folders with indexes, creating levels of information using sub-folders, etc. This is a web site that could have a lot of information that would be very helpful to visitors. The more information it has, the more important structure will become.

## **Capturing People's Imaginations**

For example, there could be a page for area restaurants. (I can't recall, but I seem to remember such a page. I can't recall if it was on-site or off. But let's say for the sake of argument that it was off.) Visitors could rate the restaurants and leave reviews. This is something that search engines love.

They could also rate and review individual chalets, so that visitors know which chalets are the most popular and why. Yes, it would take effort. But everything worth doing does.

I just think that, right now, except for the YouTube videos, everything on the site is very predictable. I like to see things that surprise me and make me go, “Wow. Great idea.”

One more thing just struck me: I don’t remember seeing a single headline on the site. Every page should have one: e.g., on the Romantic Couples page, “Mountain Laurel: One of the Most Romantic Places on Earth” – followed by, “Or So the 2,547 Couples That Have Honeymooned Here Over the Past 10 Years Have Told Us.” Or, if you want to be a bit more clever: “You’ve Never Seen a Moonrise Like the One You’ll See Over Mountain Laurel” – followed by, “View One Now with Someone You Love,” all of this beneath a picture of a moon rising over the mountains.

I just think there is so much more that could be done to capture people’s imaginations, other than “No Cleaning Fee.” You know?

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